



ROBERTS & DYBDAHL INC



February 24, 2000

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit  
Attention: STBX Ex Parte No. 582  
1925 K Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

**ENTERED**  
**Office of the Secretary**

**FEB 29 2000**

**Part of**  
**Public Record**

Dear Sir/Madam:

My name is Donald B. Strater, and I am Executive Vice President of Roberts & Dybdahl Inc. Roberts & Dybdahl Inc. brokers and distributes lumber and building materials and manufactures engineered roof and floor systems. Roberts & Dybdahl Inc. ships substantial quantities of lumber and related products from virtually all lumber producing regions in North America to its facilities and its customers' facilities located primarily in the Midwest.

We commend the Surface Transportation Board for its decision to hold hearings to determine the implications that proposed and future mergers will have on the structure of the rail industry in North America. Our primary concern is that further consolidation will necessitate re-regulation of the rail industry. Overregulation of the transportation system did not work well for either shippers or railroads. Deregulation produced an environment in which well managed railroads could provide reasonable pricing and responsive service, and at the same time, maintain a secure financial condition. An essential element of deregulation is competition. Without competition, it will become increasingly difficult to obtain reasonable pricing and responsive service without governmental intervention. Unless and until it can be determined that a merger is consistent with or outweighs the needs of the shipping public to have reasonably priced and responsive service options in an environment not overly burdened by excessive governmental regulation and interference, such merger should not be allowed.

Sincerely,  
ROBERTS & DYBDAHL INC.

Donald B. Strater  
Executive Vice President

DBS/m